



County Committee Elections

It's nomination time for the 2009 County Committee Election. This year LAA-1 which covers all of Benzie County and LAA-5 is up for election. LAA-5 covers all the townships in Osceola County EXCEPT the townships of Marion, Highland, Hartwick and Middle Branch.

The summary of rules for nominating candidates is:

- 1) Nominations for candidates to run for the Farm Service Agency County Area Committee election representing producers in a Local Administrative Area (LAA) are accepted from June 15 through August 1, 2008.
- 2) Producers who are residents in the LAA holding the election and who participate or cooperate in an FSA program and are of legal voting age may be nominated.
- 3) Individuals may nominate themselves or others as a candidate. Also, organizations representing socially disadvantaged minorities and women farmers or ranchers may also nominate candidates.
- 4) Forms and details may be picked up at the county office or downloaded from the Michigan FSA Web site. Go to <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/mi> And click on the "Vote, Make a Difference" graphic.
- 5) Eligible voters can nominate more than one candidate.
- 6) To be valid, the nomination form must be signed by the person being nominated, indicating agreement to serve if elected. The form must be returned to this office by the close of business on August 1, 2008 or post-marked by midnight August 1, 2008.

The county committee election is held by mail. Ballots will be mailed to eligible voters beginning November 3, 2008 and must be returned to this FSA office by close of business on December 1, 2008 or postmarked by midnight December 1, 2008.

Reporting Crop Acreage

The final date to report planted acreage has been extended to August 15, 2008. All cropland on the farm must be reported to receive benefits from:

- Direct-Counter –Cyclical Program (DCP)
- Non-insured Disaster Program (NAP)
- Cropland Reserve Program (CRP)
- Loan Deficiency Payments (LDP)

2005/2006/2007 CROP DISASTER PROGRAM

Applications are still accepted for this program.

The deadline has not been announced.

The office will soon be ready to take applications under the **QUALITY** portion of the program. If you are interested in applying under the quality part of CDP you may now bring in verifiable documentation to show loss of quality and reduction in price. You also have the option to provide copies of market contracts which may show a higher price than the CDP price established. Only applications that had the crop insured through Risk Management (RMA) or had Non-insured Disaster coverage (NAP) are eligible to receive benefits. We expect the announcement of a Quality signup date soon.



USDA Service Center
Wexford Osceola Benzie
Missaukee FSA
7192 E 34 Rd.
Cadillac MI 49601
231 775 7681 (phone)
231-775 0968 (fax)

Hours
Monday - Friday
8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

Office Staff
Virginia Pulford, CED
Cindy Richard, PT
Patty Salasky, PT
Benita Meekhof, PT
Ron Kamalowski, Field
Marsha Musselman, Field

Farm Loan Staff
Larry Cleary, FLM
Rick Dean, FLM (Osceola)

County Committee
Larry Buning, Vice Chairman
Gary Lathwell, Vice Chair
Mike Clous, Member
Bob Morlock, Member
Bruce Eisenga, Member
Advisor
Karen Westmaas





Loans Available for Beginning Farmers, Socially Disadvantaged: FSA has special programs and reserved funding to assist beginning farmers and or members of socially disadvantaged groups to finance agricultural enterprises. Under these programs, the FSA can provide financing to eligible applicants through either direct or guaranteed loans. FSA defines a beginning farmer as a person whom:

- Has operated a farm for not more than 10 years
- Will materially and substantially participate in the operation of the farm
- Agrees to participate in a loan assessment, borrower training and financial FSA management program
- For real estate type loans; does not own a farm in excess of 30 percent of the county's median size.

Entity members must meet the eligibility requirements. Loan approval is not guaranteed. Socially disadvantaged groups are Hispanics, American Indians, African Americans, Asians, Pacific Islanders, and women.

Rural Youth Loans: The FSA makes operating loans to individual rural youths age 10 through 20 to establish and operate income producing products. These projects must be of modest size and be initiated, developed, carried out by rural youths participating in 4-H clubs, FFA, or a similar organization or with a vocational teacher or county extension agent. The project must be an organized and supervised program at work. It must be planned and operated with the assistance of the organization advisor, produce sufficient income to repay the loan, and provide the youth with practical business and educational experience. Contact Larry Cleary or Rick Dean for more details.

Emergency Loans Available – 2007 Crops.

Benzie, Manistee, Osceola, Missaukee and Wexford County Producers are eligible for assistance under the natural disaster declaration for frost and freeze events that occurred April 4, 2007 through June 13, 2007.

All Michigan counties are eligible for assistance under the 2007 drought designation.

Emergency loan eligibility requirements include: 30% loss of normal production in an essential farm enterprise, or a qualifying physical loss; and the inability to obtain commercial credit. Insurance and other compensation are deducted to determine the amount of loss.

The current interest rate is 3.75 percent. July 7th is the deadline for application under drought and July 14th is the deadline under the frost/freeze provision.

Reporting Changes

It is important to remember to contact the office with any records changes that may have occurred. These changes would include, but are not limited to:

- Address – any contact information as well as temporary address changes should be updated for notification purposes.
- Direct Deposit – to ensure payments are deposited correctly, it is imperative that any changes in bank account information be updated immediately.
- Development – any new parcels of land removed for houses need to be reported.
- Owner/Operator Changes – report any changes in land ownership, tenants or crop share arrangements.
- Reconstitutions – changes that requires farm combinations or separations due to sale of land or change in operators, should be reported as soon as possible.
- Farm Operating Plan – any changes to the farming operation that may have an effect on “person” and/or “actively engaged” determinations.
- Entity changes - report to FSA if you are no longer using your social security number for business purposes FSA records need to be corrected prior to making your 2008 Acreage Report.



USDA eGOV Initiative

The USDA’s eGOV Initiative enables applicants to register online, find forms and complete applications via the internet. You will also find information about farm programs and farm loan programs. We encourage you to register online at <http://www.sc.egov.usda.gov>.

Office Policy-Appointments

In order to provide better service to producers, we encourage you to call for an appointment when completing an application, providing records, certifying acreage, etc. This will allow us to make sure that we have the necessary records ready for you, and should expedite your visit.

Special Accommodations

Special accommodations will be made upon request for individuals with disabilities, vision impairment or hearing impairment. If accommodations are required, individuals should contact the county FSA office staff directly or by phone at (231) 775-7681 ext. 2.

Sodbuster Regulations

The term "sod busting" is used to identify the plowing up of erosion-prone grasslands for use as cropland. Sodbuster violations are unauthorized tillage practices on highly erodible lands that converted native vegetation such as rangeland or woodland, to crop production after Dec. 23, 1985.

Farmers and ranchers should be aware that if they use highly erodible land for crop production without proper conservation measures, they risk losing eligibility to participate in Farm Service Agency programs.

Before you clear, plow or otherwise prepare areas not presently under crop production for planting, you are required to file an AD-1026, indicating the area to be brought into production.

If Natural Resources Conservation Service indicates on a CPA-026 that the area will be highly erodible land, you will be required to develop and implement a conservation plan on the affected acreage, before bringing the land into production.

In addition, producers and your affiliates have to file an AD-1026 with the FSA staff before any farm program payments are made. The AD-1026 form is your certification that HELC, as well as wetland conservation, provisions will not be violated

Livestock Compensation Program (LCP)

The deadline to apply or complete the 2005/2006/2007 LCP application is July 18, 2008. Producers that have pasture loss from drought conditions in any one of the three years may apply for benefits. If interested in this program contact Patty and ask for complete details and provisions to be met.

DATES TO REMEMBER

June 17th COC Meeting Open to the Public

July 15^h COC Meeting/Open to the Public

July 18^h LCP Sign Up Ends

August 1st COC nominations due date

August 15th Last day to report remaining crops

New FSA Aerial Maps/GIS

As part of a decade long program to digitally map the nation's farms and fields, USDA has established the Common Land Unit (CLU) as a standardized GIS data layer that has allowed mapping to be integrated easily on a nationwide basis. FSA manages this CLU layer through a distributed database environment.

We previously notified producers that FSA is changing to a new mapping system. We provided a map in late 2007 to each producer and gave you the opportunity to look at these maps and ask for corrections if needed. The view you were looking at was of the 1998 crop year. We have now updated our maps to the 2005 crop year. As you make your 2008 acreage report you will receive a color copy set of maps for your records. We will also make any necessary changes that involve the crop land areas. Our maps do not reflect your total acreage for tax purposes. Additional copies are available for a fee of \$1.00 each. If you have a home computer we can also make the maps available in digital format.

FARM FACILITY LOAN PROGRAM

Applications are being accepted to provide low interest financing for producers to build or upgrade farm storage and handling facilities. The current interest rate for loans approved in June/08 is 3.375 percent. There is an application fee of \$45. Applicants will also pay other fees such as a title search/opinion or title insurance. The maximum loan amount is \$100,000 for a seven year loan. If interested, contact Patty to send you complete information regarding the Facility Loan Program.



New CRP SAFE Practice

Applications will be accepted starting July 1, 2008, to enroll acreage under a new CRP practice designed to benefit Michigan Native Pollinators. The CRP SAFE practice consists of grasslands (wild-flowers) which provide diverse sources of nectar and pollen along with bare soil patches for ground nesting pollinators. Bees, butterflies, moths and other pollinators will benefit from this new CRP practice. If interested, please contact Cindy for additional information or to start the enrollment process.

AD-1026 Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification

All producers are required to notify the FSA Office and complete form AD-1026 before they intend to do any of the following. ** Convert wetlands by **draining, dredging, filling, leveling, tiling, land clearing** or any other means that would allow the planting of any crop, pasture, agricultural commodity, or other such crops. ** Plant or produce an agricultural commodity on wetlands converted after December 23, 1985. ** Plant or produce an agricultural commodity on highly erodible fields unless actively applying an approved conservation plan or maintaining a fully applied conservation system. NRCS will make the determination if the area in question is a wetland or highly erodible land. Failure to follow established wetland and HEL regulations will result in the loss of program benefits for current and possibly future years

DCP SIGNUP BEGINS!!!

Signup is underway for the 2008 DCP program. Producer's can visit their local FSA office or sign-up online. They can choose payment options, assign crop shares and sign and submit their contracts from any computer with Internet access.

For 2008, eligible producers may request to receive an advance payment of 22 percent of the direct payment for each commodity associated with the farm. Advance payments will be issued as soon as practical after enrollment.

Final direct payments will be issued after October 1, 2008.

Producers with base acreage 10 acres or less may not be eligible to participate in the DCP program. Please contact the local FSA office for details. Call the office today and make an appointment to sign-up.

Final Date to Sign-up is September 30th, 2008.

What is Mid-Contract Management of CRP?

Mid-Contract Management of CRP are activities that must be performed on certain practices to ensure the original plant diversity, wildlife benefits, and protections of the soil and water resources are present for the life of the contract. For CRP practices with grasses, legumes, & wildflowers, research has shown that typically 5-6 years after establishment the site becomes dominated by a thick growth of the grasses. To ensure wildlife habitat benefits in these sites, management is required to encourage legumes and wildflowers, and to ensure the grass is not too thick to limit small wildlife species from traveling through the cover to meet their needs. This is your responsibility and must be followed according to your conservation plan. If a variance is needed for the above stated policy, please contact the office. Variances can be pre-approved on a case-by-case basis.

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